7555-01-P

**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION**

**Agency Information Collection Activities:  Proposed Collection; Comment Request**

**AGENCY**: National Science Foundation.

**ACTION**: Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY**: The National Science Foundation (NSF) is announcing plans to renew this collection. In accordance with the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, we are providing opportunity for public comment on revisions to the Business Systems Review (BSR) Guide. After obtaining and considering public comment, NSF will prepare the submission requesting Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance of this collection for no longer than 3 years.

**DATES**: Written comments should be received by **[INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]** to be assured of consideration. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

**ADDRESSES**: Written comments regarding the information collection and requests for copies of the proposed information collection request should be addressed to Suzanne Plimpton, Reports Clearance Officer, National Science Foundation, 2415 Eisenhower Ave., Rm. E 7400, Alexandria, VA 22314, or by e-mail to splimpto@nsf.gov.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**: Suzanne Plimpton on (703) 292-7556 or send e-mail to splimpto@nsf.gov. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information

Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339, which is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year (including federal holidays).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**:

This clearance request is for a renewal of the NSF Business Systems Review Guide (BSR). It aligns with the Uniform Guidance (UG) and the *NSF Research Infrastructure Guide* which is intended for use by NSF staff and by external proponents of major facility projects for use in planning. The primary purpose of this revision is to clarify the BSR process, update references to the revised UG, and address new requirements and policy in the UG and NSF terms and conditions.  The draft version of the NSF BSR Guide is available on the NSF website at: [http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/lfo/lfo_documents.jsp.](http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/lfo/lfo_documents.jsp.) To facilitate review, a Change Log with brief comment explanations of the changes is provided in the guide.

*Comments:*  In addition to the type of comments identified above, comments are also invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology. After obtaining and considering public comment, NSF will prepare the submission requesting OMB clearance of this collection for no longer than 3 years.

*Title of Collection*: Business Systems Review Guide

*OMB Approval Number*: 3145-0255.

*Expiration Date of Approval*: January 31, 2024.

*Type of Request*: Intent to seek approval to extend with revision an information collection for three years.

*Proposed Project*:  The National Science Foundation Act of 1950 (Public Law 81-507) set forth NSF's mission and purpose:

"To promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense. * * *"

The Act authorized and directed NSF to initiate and support:

☐      Basic scientific research and research fundamental to the engineering process;

☐      Programs to strengthen scientific and engineering research potential;

☐      Science and engineering education programs at all levels and in all the various fields of science and engineering;

☐      Programs that provide a source of information for policy formulation; and

☐      Other activities to promote these ends.

Among Federal agencies, NSF is a leader in providing the academic community with advanced instrumentation needed to conduct state-of-the-art research and to educate the next generation of scientists, engineers and technical workers. The knowledge generated by these tools sustains U.S. leadership in science and engineering (S&E) to drive the U.S. economy and secure the future. NSF's responsibility is to ensure that the research and education communities have access to these resources, and to provide the support needed to utilize them optimally, and implement timely upgrades.

The scale of advanced instrumentation ranges from small research instruments to shared resources or facilities that can be used by entire communities. The demand for such instrumentation is very high, and is growing rapidly, along with the pace of discovery. For major facilities and shared infrastructure, the need is particularly high. This trend is expected to accelerate in the future as increasing numbers of researchers and educators rely on such large facilities, instruments, and databases to provide the reach to make the next intellectual leaps.

NSF currently provides support for facility construction from two accounts: the Major Research Equipment and Facility Construction (MREFC) account, and the Research and Related Activities (R&RA) account. The MREFC account, established in FY 1995, is a separate budget line item that provides an agency-wide mechanism, permitting directorates to undertake large facility projects, roughly $100M or greater, and mid-scale projects in the range of approximately $20-$100M.

Facilities are defined as shared-use infrastructure, instrumentation and equipment that are accessible to a broad community of researchers and/or educators. Facilities may be centralized or may consist of distributed installations. They may incorporate large-scale networking or computational infrastructure, multi-user instruments or networks of such instruments, or other infrastructure, instrumentation and equipment having a major impact on a broad segment of a scientific or engineering discipline. Historically, awards have been made for such diverse projects as accelerators, telescopes, research vessels and aircraft, and geographically distributed but networked sensors and instrumentation.

The growth and diversification of large facility projects require that NSF remain attentive to the ever-changing issues and challenges inherent in their planning, construction, operation, management and oversight. Most importantly, dedicated, competent NSF and awardee staff are needed to manage and oversee these projects; giving the attention and oversight that good practice dictates and that proper accountability to taxpayers and Congress demands. To this end, there is also a need for consistent, documented requirements and procedures to be understood and used by NSF program managers and awardees for all such large projects.

*Use of the Information:* Facilities are an essential part of the science and engineering enterprise and supporting them is one major responsibility of the National Science Foundation (NSF). NSF makes awards to external entities – primarily universities, consortia of universities or non-profit organizations – to undertake construction, management and operation of facilities. Such awards frequently take the form of cooperative agreements. NSF does not directly construct or operate the facilities it supports. However, NSF retains responsibility for overseeing their development, management, and successful performance. Business Systems Reviews (BSR) of NSF's Major Facilities are designed to provide reasonable assurance that the business systems (people, processes, and technologies) of NSF Recipients are effective in meeting administrative responsibilities and satisfying Federal regulatory requirements, including those listed in NSF's Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG).

These reviews are not considered audits but are intended to be assistive in nature; aiding the Recipient in following good practices where appropriate and bringing them into compliance, if needed. A team of BSR participants is assembled to assess the Recipient's policies, procedures, and practices to

determine whether, taken collectively, these administrative business systems used in managing the Facility meet NSF award expectations and comply with Federal regulations.

The BSR Guide is designed for use by both our customer community and NSF staff for guidance in executing these reviews. The BSR Guide defines the overall framework and structure and summarizes the details outlined in the internal operating guidelines and procedures used by BSR Participants to execute the review process. Management principles and practices are specified for seven core functional areas (CFA) and are used by BSR participants in performing these evaluations. Roles and responsibilities of the NSF stakeholders involved in the process are outlined in the BSR Guide as well as the expectations of the Recipient.

This version of the Business Systems Guide aligns with the Uniform Guidance and the *NSF Research Infrastructure Guide*. This Guide will be updated periodically to reflect changes in requirements, policies and/or procedures. Award Recipients are expected to monitor and adopt the requirements and good practices included in the Guide.

The submission of Award Recipient and Project administrative business process and procedural documentation used in support of operations of the Major Facilities is part of the collection of information. This information is used to help NSF fulfill this responsibility in supporting merit-based research and education projects in all the scientific and engineering disciplines. The Foundation also has a continuing commitment to provide oversight on facilities through their full life cycle which must be balanced against monitoring its information collection so as to identify and address any excessive review and reporting burdens.

NSF has approximately twenty (20) Major Facilities in various stages of design, construction, operations, and divestment. The need for a BSR and review scope is based on NSF's internal annual Major Facility Portfolio Risk Assessment and the assessment of various risks factors.

*Burden to the Public:*  The Foundation estimates that approximately one and half (1.5) Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) are necessary for a major facility to respond to the requirements of a BSR; or 3,120 hours. With an average of four (4) BSRs conducted a year, this equates to roughly 12,000 public burden hours annually.

Dated:  January 19, 2022.

**Suzanne H. Plimpton**,

*Reports Clearance Officer,*

*National Science Foundation.*

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